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MONTHLY LETTER

Devoted to Spiritual and Philosophical Problems -- by Manly P. Hall

Dear Friend:

In last month's letter we attempted to show how philosophy, as logic, established the reasonableness or unreasonableness of mental premises through a definite procedure. This month we shall attempt to show how philosophy, as ETHICS, examines the moral value of thought and action.

Ethics is generally defined as the science of morality; but this definition, like so many others in the field of abstract learning, must not be taken too literally. In practice ethics is the science of attempting to understand morality. The whole subject of morality is susceptible of division into two major aspects. The first of these parts seeks to answer the question: what is morality? The second seeks the answer to the question: what ought morality to be?

The question: what is morality? is generally answered by a survey of the moral codes and statutes of various civilizations, past and present. This survey reveals the social outworking of the moral impulse in man. As we have no way of examining the moral impulse, except by a consideration of its consequences, we judge morality by morals, even as we judge the quality of minds by the thoughts which emanate from them. A rather comprehensive review of morality is therefore not difficult to secure, as long as we are satisfied to estimate causes entirely by their effects.

The question of what morality ought to be is, unfortunately, far more abstract and difficult to answer. We all know what we do, but we are not all so certain of what we should do. Morality is

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a code of relationships. It is that part of philosophy which estimates the importance of one person's actions upon another person. There has always been a wide interval between theory and practice in human relationships. Although civilization is generally regarded as a moral empire, its codes have not produced individual or collective security. Therefore, the true ends of morality have not been achieved. An example of the abstract issue of morality is patriotism. Most nations regard patriotism as a moral virtue, yet patriotism as now interpreted is often anti-social and destructive. Thus we see that the question of what is patriotism, if examined in the light of accepted tradition, might be answered with the words "fanatical nationalism." If, on the other hand, we ask the question: what ought patriotism to be? we should have to answer it in some more noble strain, possibly with the definition "love of man." In the words of Thomas Paine, "The world is my country."

Of course it is necessary, in approaching the problem of ethics, to establish some standard of action. This standard becomes the accepted measure of morality. Unfortunately there are fundamental differences of opinion as to what constitutes moral standards. These opinions may be classified under four general headings:

1st: Theologians maintain that the will of God is the standard of morality; that the Scriptural books of the world, because they are accepted as containing the revealed Word of God, are the absolute textbooks of morality.

2nd: The rationalists maintain that pure reason is the ultimate criterion of morality; that philosophy, by extending all moral values to their abstract ultimates of perfection, reveals the code of action that all men should strive for.

3rd: The hedonists take the ground that comfort, pleasure and utility should be the dominating factors in morality; that, individually and collectively, we should perform those actions which are most pleasant and least arduous and cause the least social confusion. Many of the adherents to this system view the more conservative codes of moralism as merely religious inhibitions.

4th: The biologists assume that morality is perfect adjustment to natural law and social environment. To this school naturalness is the chief of the virtues; and a person who lives a standard perfectly consistent with what he is, in terms of species and type, may be regarded as a moral animal. The biologists, however, do assume that natural law to some measure involves community responsibility. The biological definition of morality is, therefore, perfect biological adaptation to environment and circumstance.

In addition to these four rather well defined interpretations of ethics, there is a fifth abstract approach to the subject. By this approach morality is made a synonym of perfection. Perfectionism is defined as the ethics of self-realization. This interpretation defines morality as a purely personal issue. Right and wrong are regarded as individual problems, and morality consists of each individual living his own code according to his own light; at the same time presuming the existence of a natural impulse in man which is leading him to a rational and constructive philosophy of life.

One of the great problems peculiarly within the province of ethics is the origin of the so-called moral urge. Is there something within man impelling him to right action, or is morality merely the outgrowth of primitive social relationship? In other words, is there an absolute standard of right and wrong in the universe, or is there merely a relative standard arising from action? Again, does the moral urge derive its authority from what is commonly termed universal law? Is this universal law the conscious Will of the Creative Agent, or is it mere-

ly the mechanistic procedure of universal agency? Is there a universal consciousness of morality, or is morality only an accident of human consciousness arising out of human chemistry?

The intuitionists assume that the human mind becomes aware, through a mystical extension of consciousness, of a vast universal morality by which man should regulate his life. The materialists, on the other hand, contend that there is no moral certainty in existence and that all action is finally motivated by impulses toward survival. Another definition of morality, therefore, is the code of survival. Experience, over vast periods of time, has justified certain attitudes towards action and demonstrated the necessity of certain relationships. These actions and relationships constitute the so-called moral evidences in life. Ethics is the science of these actions and relationships, and the purpose of philosophy is to understand and apply them.

All human beings naturally desire to be happy and all justifiable moral codes must, in some measure, acknowledge the desirability of this end. Ethics divides happiness into two forms. The first it terms egotistic, and the second universalistic. Egotistic happiness, as a code of ethics, seeks the comfort, security and pleasure of the individual, and under its law each man places his own well-being as the first consideration of life. Universalistic happiness, as a code of ethics, identifies the happiness of the individual with collective happiness.

Nearly all of the great philosophers, mystics and prophets, of the world have been dominated by the universalistic theory of happiness. To the wise man the happiness of each depends upon the happiness of all. From a moral standpoint, unselfishness is regarded as a more refined emotion than selfishness; therefore universalistic ethics is regarded as superior and more enlightened than egotistic ethics. The materialist, however, will immediately ask: by what rule do we posit unselfishness as superior to selfishness? This immediately plunges the mind into the deepest parts of the moral issue.

If we accept ethics as a philosophy of conduct, we must then define right conduct. According to philosophical morality, right conduct is that system of action that most completely meets human need and leads towards the realization of the most noble

human aspiration. It would follow, as Immanuel Kant has observed, that ethics leads to that ultimate condition in which individuals live together in a condition of ends, rather than in a state of means. All action is a means towards an end. When right action accomplishes the end, then we pass from the state of effort to the state of reward. Happiness is defined as that condition of consciousness which man enjoys when he has fulfilled the requisite actions to produce happiness. The old masters of ethical philosophy postulated the Golden Age as that time which was to come, when all morality as means had accomplished morality as ends; and men dwelt together in a social order arising out of moral discipline and the permanent establishment of moral values.

To students of metaphysical philosophy the issues of ethics must be developed along lines of metaphysical inference. At the same time, the physical inferences cannot be ignored; they should be regarded as Plato regarded them, as suspended from spiritual causes. The initiated Pagans regarded ethics as one of the seven major attributes of divinity. God was not only spirit and body, but also soul, and the term soul inferred the whole sphere of moral virtues. Socrates declared God to be good, thus positing morality as an inevitable correlative of divinity.

The word "good" is a very abstract term and is impossible of exact definition. It is almost certain to be involved in opinion when defined. Therefore, like truth, it is divided into an absolute and a relative aspect. The absolute aspect is ignored as impossible of understanding, and its relative aspect is defined in terms of existing standards, inferring honesty, virtue, obligation, etc. We live in an age of exploitation, in which might exercises its temporal advantage over right, and the issues of morality are confused by the despotism of advantage. The will of the strong becomes the passing standard of right and wrong. Conquerors make laws for the conquered, and the uninformed ascribe to these laws a universal aspect which they do not merit. In time, errors long perpetuated become custom. Men no longer examine them, but accept unquestioning old edicts and ancient fallacies.

It is inconceivable, as Francis Bacon has observed, that this great universal plan should be without

a soul. We are constantly confronted with irrefutable evidence of a directing Intellect. If there is consciousness in man, there is consciousness in the universe of which man is but so small a part. If there is morality in man, there is but one source from which he can have derived it, and that is from the Sovereign Morality of the world.

Plato was unquestionably one of the noblest men who has ever lived upon this earth. The theology of Plato is one of the most exalted religious systems ever established in the world. There is no better way to approach the philosophy of Ethics than through a series of definitions Platonically set forth. You will remember from our previous letter that the logic of Plato descended from generals to particulars, from universal concepts to specific applications. The Platonic philosophy is developed from these fundamental premises:

1: That Universal Cause, which men have named God, is Divine Life, to which the qualities of consciousness, intelligence and virtue are intrinsic.

2: God is good; that is, Divinity, by virtue of its own existence and its own nature, is by necessity the standard of absolute perfection, to which all other things must conform if they are to be god-like.

3: It therefore follows that, all who participate of God as Energy or Mind must also participate of God as Virtue, as these qualities are indivisible and essentially one.

4: In the process of growth, or evolution, forms partake of Divinity first as energy or consciousness; second as intelligence or mind; and third as virtue or morality. It follows that virtue is one of the last of human achievements, for creatures possessing life and intelligence do not necessarily possess virtue. Virtue, while latent in all natures, is said to be possessed when it is objectified in action. Thus we may say that a being possesses, or does not possess, virtue in the sense that it either manifests, or does not manifest, virtue in individual action.

5: Life energizes, intellect organizes, virtue civilizes. Thus all of the constructive relationships, by which isolated creatures are finally brought into a cooperative community existence, arise from man's realization of Divinity as virtue.

6: Virtue is demonstrated on several planes of nu-

ture, but it must never be confused with various human emotions. Love, friendship, mercy, obligation, responsibility, generosity, etc. are terms often confused with virtue. It should be remembered that virtue is a principle. We may call it, for practical purposes, the principle of right relationships. Any constructive emotion may or may not be virtuous according to its intrinsic merit, for virtue is a principle and not an action. Generosity, for example, is not a virtue in itself, but it becomes a virtue when directed by wisdom and integrity. Impractical generosity can in no way be regarded as a virtue.

7: Thus, it appears that action partakes of virtue, to the degree that it is consistent with that universal fitness which is the very foundation of the world.

8: Platonically considered, virtue is more than morality, for morality is limited to creatures possessing a moral nature, whereas virtue exists as a principle beyond the sphere of moral values. Ethics, consequently, goes beyond morality and includes that aspect of the Divine purpose which is suggested by the term "fitness."

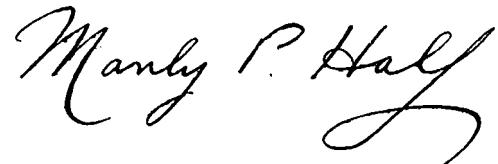
9: We must now define fitness. As we examine the universal plan, as it is manifest in the universe spread out before us, we must be particularly impressed by the rightness and orderliness everywhere manifest. To use a homely simile, there seems to be a place for everything and everything is in its place. The parts work together; the diversity is enclosed within an all-sufficient unity; cooperation is everywhere present. Contemplating the mystery of Divine order, we cannot fail to be impressed with a certain sense of substantial fitness. Everything is where it ought to be, doing what it ought to do. This must be the pattern of all human re-

lationships. Thus ethics is man where he ought to be, doing what he ought to do, synchronizing personal purpose with universal purpose.

10: Immanuel Kant gives a lofty definition of ethics in his famous categorical imperative. He realized that each man must so act that, if that man's action became a universal law, it would be just and sufficient. The true student of ethics bows to the inevitable spiritual realities of life. He realizes that obedience to universal law is the beginning of individual fitness.

Morality is generally involved in the problem of good and evil, and numerous man-made codes of right and wrong are confused with ethics. All right and wrong must be measured by the law of universal fitness and not by man-made codes. When an individual, through ignorance, violates some principle of universal fitness, he suffers. When a community violates universal principle of community relationships, that community falls into evil, even though its man-made laws are not transgressed. Man is happy and his world is at peace when he lives in harmony with universal purpose. It is universal purpose which reveals natural ethics. To the philosopher fitness not only infers rightness but the "fitting in" quality. We are virtuous when we "fit in" to, the law of life. We are moral when we live in perfect attunement with the plan of which we are a part. This plan is not only a physical plan but a mental and spiritual plan. When our spiritual life is consistent with the spiritual purpose of being, when our mental life is in harmony with the laws of mind, and when our physical life is consistent with the laws of nature, we may then regard ourselves as ethical creatures, possessing virtue and morality.

Yours sincerely,



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Some Philosophical Fragments

Supplement to Students Monthly Letter

HEALING

BY MANLY HALL

(Continued from Oct. Letter Supplement)

Occult philosophy is not suited for small capacities and when little minds grasp at great subjects there is usually much misunderstanding to say the least. To imagine oneself the victim of an endless chain of infernal necromancies or to feel oneself the incarnation of a demigod must lead to disastrous complexes. If students of metaphysics could realize that the whole universe is ruled by law and order and that a sovereign good directs it all, they would know without question that while small ills may temporarily obscure the divine purpose, in time and eternity all things work together for good. It is the duty of man to conquer the unknown through intelligent effort and not to sit shivering in the

darkness of ignorance, bestowing a malevolent intent upon every shadow.

Whatever we believe, no matter how ridiculous, we can quickly find evidence to support. We read into books what we want to find there and we perceive in life that which we desire to perceive. Thus an imagination complex, once established, gathers momentum with every passing year until it seems to the unfortunate person who has it that the whole universe testifies to his superstition.

There is a fine line of demarcation between imagination and clairvoyance and many persons who believe that they have actually experienced spiritual phenomena have really only suffered from a highly aggravated attack of imagination. It has been our observation that most people who say they have metaphysical experiences have experiences similar to those which they have recently read in books

THE PRAYER OF FIRMICUS

"But lest my words be bereft of divine aid and the envy of some hateful man impugn them by hostile attacks, whoever thou art, God, who continuest day after day the course of the heavens in rapid rotation, who perpetuatest the mobile agitation of ocean's tides, who strengthenest earth's solidity in the immovable strength of its foundation, who refreshest with night's sleep the toil of our earthly bodies, who when our strength is renewed returnest the grace of sweetest light, who stirrest all the substance of thy work by the salutary breath of the winds, who pourest forth the waves of streams and fountains in tireless force, who revolvest the varied seasons by sure periods of days: sole Governor and Prince of all, sole Emperor and Lord, whom all the celestial forces serve, whose will is the substance of perfect work, by whose faultless laws all nature is forever adorned and regulated; thou Father alike and Mother of every thing, thou bound to thyself, Father and Son, by one bond of relationship; to Thee we extend suppliant hands, Thee with trembling supplication we venerate; grant us grace to attempt the explanation of the courses of thy stars; thine is the power that somehow impels us to that interpretation. With a mind pure and separated from all earthly thoughts and purged from every stain of sin we have written these books for thy Romans."

or have overheard at some gossip mart. They are perfectly sincere, perhaps, in believing that they have actually passed through a mystical experience but an overwrought imagination resulted in the deceit. Generally speaking true clairvoyants are not emotional people nor are they uninformed dabblers in the shallows of metaphysics. When we find a strongly emotional and almost hysterical person who is constantly "seeing things" or is perfectly certain that he or she is a focal point for supernatural circumstances, we must conclude that it is either a problem in imagination or in negative mediumship. Most probably it will be the former.

The diseases arising from imagination are usually morbid hallucinations often verging into hysteria and sometimes leading into forms of insanity. The physical results are often reflected into the glandular chain, affect the sympathetic nervous system and bring about divitalizations and anemia. These conditions in turn open the body to infections and contagions and reduce the recuperative power.

6th: DISEASES DUE TO HABIT. The mind with the least number of habits is capable of the greatest amount of constructive thinking. Habits prejudice the intellect causing a form of dishonesty which is certain to influence all decisions. Habits come under two general classifications; the first we may call racial or environmental and the second individual or innate. A very good example of unfortunate racial habit in religion is the King James version of the Holy Bible. This translation teems with errors and is hopelessly unreliable from a scholastic viewpoint, yet popular acceptance has caused this mis-version of holy writ to come to be recognized as infallible so that the religious public would now reject a correct translation. In fact it has already shown its attitude in the matter by refusing a revised edition. For over 300 years erroneous theological notions have been circulated, deriving their authority from the King James translation of the Bible. Christendom has been the loser and prejudice triumphs over truth. Habits and precedents are constantly persecuting originality and progress.

Most persons coming into metaphysical lines of thinking bring with them at least a subconscious strata of ecclesiastical prejudice. New thought may

be in their heads but orthodoxy is in their bones. They accept new ideas and often sincerely seek to apply them but in nearly every case the old opinions crop out, until modern metaphysics in its present form is a sort of compromise between classical paganism and mid-Victorian orthodoxy. Modern orthodox Christendom and the ancient philosophical religions are utterly irreconcilable, and he who tries to mingle them together in a broad-minded eclecticism creates a mass of contradictions within himself. An effort to live this compromise is dangerous if not fatal. No one can live more than one system of philosophical thinking at a time. We may appreciate all of them and study them but we cannot apply their disciplines indiscriminately. A great number of metaphysical students consider it broad-minded to be Cabalistic on Monday, Vedantic on Tuesday, Platonic on Wednesday, Yogis on Thursday, Mohammedan on Friday, Christian on Saturday and Zoroastrians on Sunday. At the same time they are also dominated by a subjective orthodoxy to some one of the numerous Christian cults or isms. It might not seem that such a procedure would have a destructive effect on the health but it has been definitely demonstrated that it has. A system of religious belief has a distinct vibration of its own and acceptance of that belief produces a definite chemical change in the structure of the body. The combining of these various chemistries without law or plan destroys the bodily equilibrium, unseats the intellect, and works a strain upon the whole psychoneurotic structure. We may be tolerant of all beliefs, inform ourselves in their philosophies and principles, but the purpose of such instruction is thwarted if we allow the various teachings to remain in the mind as a muddle of undigested material. We should never study more than we can classify and use. If we do we shall suffer from mental indigestion which incidentally is a very real and serious disease.

The pathology of habit has many aspects. Civilization is a habit, our methods of thinking are habits, our clothes are habits, the way we eat is a habit, our laws are habits and our attitudes towards success and failure are among the most pernicious of our habits. Nearly all these habits arise from precedent and custom and though they be uncomfortable and

even detrimental to us we accept them as inevitable elements in our life. It is quite certain that such an array of habits will infect our philosophies. This is definitely evident in the modern realistic schools springing up in France and Germany. When habits affect our philosophies, they affect our lives; when habits affect our lives they affect our health, and when they affect our health the consideration and classification of them must be a part of the healing art. So when a man is sick we should study his habits, not only mental but physical, not only individual but those of the social strata from which he comes. We shall discover in civilization itself idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies which become chemical factors in the health of races.

To return for a moment to the problem of affirmation and denial as taught by certain metaphysical groups. These also become habits and from long usage we come to regard them as integral factors in thought and action. A man has a bad habit when he uses a formula for a crutch in his daily thinking.

7th: OCCULT DISEASES. Every art and science has its own diseases. Each new discovery which man adds to the subject of learning brings with it the possibility of abuse and a new chain of fatal consequences. There are a number of ailments which arise directly from the mis-use of metaphysical science and it is necessary to treat of these separately and at some length.

Type A: comprises such ills as arise from misdirected efforts at spiritual development. The most common form is that caused by attempts to develop the latent spiritual forces through Oriental breathing exercises, concentrations, meditations, the recitation of mantrams and the stimulation of unnatural mental attitudes. There are great numbers of so-called teachers of metaphysics who teach "short cuts to cosmic consciousness." Practically all of these systems are fatal to the student if he practices them with sufficient industry. Most dabblers are preserved from great harm, however, because they have not the concentration or continuity to perform these exercises for any length of time. The student of metaphysics who attempts any occult practices without previously passing through many years of preparatory probationship and disciplines may expect to ruin his health and endanger his sanity. Efforts

to open the CHAKRAS or raise KUNDALINI, or stimulate clairvoyance are followed by nervous breakdowns, cerebro congestion, glandular derangements and numerous other ills, some of which are incurable.

The only way to treat such diseases successfully is to get the case early, insist upon the patient discontinuing all metaphysical speculation, readjust the diet, stressing physical culture, and surrounding him with simple, normal interests until nature has a chance to build back some of the disintegrated etheric structure.

Type B: arises usually out of spiritism, mediumship and efforts to develop clairvoyant powers through a formula generally known as "going into the silence." To sit in a dark room thinking about nothing is an almost open invitation to obsession. By the word "obsession" the occult philosophers understood: the superimposition of one personality over another. In modern medicine the patient is usually classed with the insane. Obsession may be of three kinds:

That in which a decarnate entity, once human, attaches itself to the invisible bodies of a living person. A decarnate entity which will do this is usually of a low type and its attachment to the living person is for the gratification of appetite and desire. Such obsessions may be continual or intermittent. When continual the person obsessed generally manifests destructive and degenerate tendencies and often completely loses their own identity. In intermittent cases the sufferer has temporary lapses into lucidity.

The second general form of obsession is when the patient is over-shadowed or dominated by an invisible entity, not human, an elementary or elemental spirit. This form of obsession reduces the sufferer to a completely irrational state.

The third form in which the unfortunate truth seeker comes under the domination of a person, not dead, but who uses the negative organism of the obsessed person for the accomplishment of some special purpose, usually nefarious.

The only way to work with cases of obsession is by definite occult methods. Very often the physician has to force the obsessing entity out of the body of the patient through a tremendous exertion of will power, and if he is not properly equipped for his

task the physician may become a victim of the obsession himself. The problem of obsession is treated in the New Testament under the terminology of "casting out demons."

Type C: In addition to these major forms of occult disease there are numerous others which have been cataloged by Paracelsus, but we need here only sum them up under the general heading of occult mal-practice, or as it is more commonly known, black magic. It is an eternal but unwritten law of the philosophers that no secret of occult philosophy can be used legitimately for any selfish or personal reason. It is said of the Initiate as of Jesus that; others he can help but himself he cannot save. By this it is not meant that each person should not protect himself by every reasonable and proper means, but he must never attempt to direct occult forces upon himself. Those who study metaphysics therefore with an eye to the improvement of their material state and in order that they may have an advantage over their fellow creatures and more readily exploit them, are guilty of the unpardonable sin. Spiritual arts must always be used for the common good and any other application is deadly. Selfishness disqualifies a metaphysician and if he enters upon the subject of metaphysics with an ulterior motive that motive itself will be his undoing. The shores of the sea of metaphysics are strewn with the wreckage of the unworthy.

We can only have true contentment when we live in perfect harmony with the law which created us and by which we are maintained. Any deviation from this law brings about our destruction. Absolute adjustment with Nature's purposes is the secret of both happiness and longevity. Disease is a departure from Nature; health a return again. To realize this is to possess the secret of life and to apply this realization is to live. Nature is just and the unjust must perish for their intemperance; Nature is impersonal and all that is personal must pass away. Nature envies nothing, is jealous of nothing, and is a stranger to ambition. All who are motivated by impulses less universal than those of life itself will be destroyed by the inadequacy of their own ideals. Those who are narrow cease for lack of breadth; those who are shallow perish for lack of depth. Only such as are in all things moderate, in all things consistent, and in all things natural can survive, for these live on because they partake of the qualities of continuance. Sharing in the qualities of the gods (who have neither beginning nor end) man thus unfolds one by one every divine potentiality until his divine destiny is at length fulfilled. Disease, decay, and death are absorbed into the effulgency of the illumined soul; and man diverging from the limitations of the flesh, inclines towards immortality, to finally merge himself with infinite and changeless Good.

THE END

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A SUGGESTION—BOOKS FROM THE PEN OF MANLY P. HALL MAKE EXCELLENT CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR YOUR FRIENDS. WRITE FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.